

# Rhode Island's Common Core of Learning for a New Century

## Endorsed by the leadership of:

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training  
Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council  
Rhode Island School-to-Career Initiative  
Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation  
Rhode Island Economic Policy Council  
Rhode Island Office of Higher Education  
University of Rhode Island  
Rhode Island College  
Community College of Rhode Island

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Lincoln C. Almond, Governor

RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF REGENTS  
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

James A. DiPrete, Chairman

Jo Eva Gaines, Vice-Chairperson

Colleen A. Callahan, Secretary

Representative Paul W. Crowley

Sue P. Duff

Senator Hanna M. Gallo

Gary E. Grove

Patrick A. Guida, Esq.

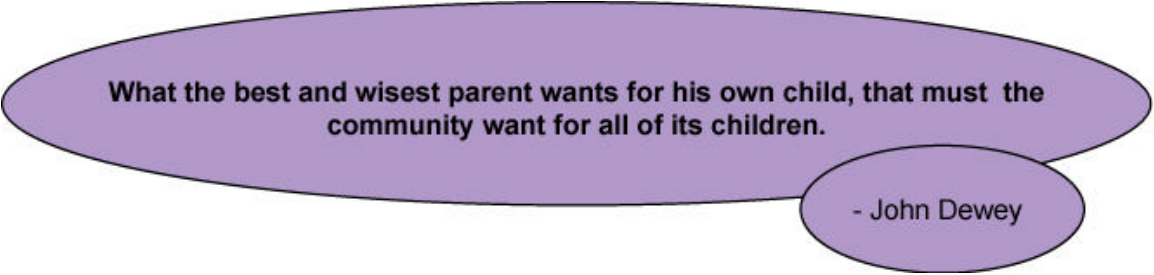
Mario A. Mancieri

Vidal P. Perez

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
EDUCATION

Peter McWalters, Commissioner

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, color or handicap in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.



**What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children.**

- John Dewey

Historically, Rhode Island has expected much from its educational system. In the future we will expect even more. The needs of a changing society place new and greater demands on students and on schools. Both must prepare for a future we cannot truly envision. Schools must prepare students not only to work, but also to live, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is important to ask how well our current educational system has served Rhode Island, and how it must be improved and changed. Our speculations about life in the future are tested against what sociologists, economists, scientists and artists tell us that we may expect. Each of us filters these ideas through our own cultural, political and family experiences. We question what we will require from our educational institutions. How will we earn our livelihoods? What advances in technology, transportation, health, the arts and recreation will influence the way we live?

*Rhode Island's New Common Core of Learning* pays its respects to our past at the same time that it represents our promise to the future. ALL KIDS, not just some kids, deserve the best education. With this in mind, together we will create an educational system that renews our society and prepares Rhode Island for the future.

## INTRODUCTION

The late eighties and early nineties witnessed major national reports and initiatives focused on education reform. Rhode Island, responding to these challenges, also drafted plans for the restructuring of its Pre K-12 educational system and called for the citizens of the state to establish learner goals and high standards of performance for all of our students.

In 1992, the Board of Regents and the Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education convened a group of over 100 parents, educators, and leaders from business and civic life. Together, they researched issues about what Rhode Island students should know and be able to do upon completion of their elementary and secondary education. A series of public forums and focus groups were held across the state to gather insights and ideas. A survey was created in five languages to ask this question also of Rhode Island residents. Printed in five languages, over 200,000 copies of the survey were distributed across the state asking, “What should all young adults in Rhode Island know and be able to do to meet the responsibilities and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?”

Responses were tabulated and a writing team distilled the collected thoughts of the respondents into Rhode Island’s *Common Core of Learning*. This document, issued in final form in Fall 1995, identified four major attributes that young adults in Rhode Island should possess to be adequately equipped for life and living in the next century:

- ✓ **Communication** – reading, writing, speaking, listening, and conversing effectively.
- ✓ **Problem Solving** – viewing learning as a lifelong process in which problem solving complements the body of knowledge by helping students acquire and apply new knowledge.
- ✓ **Body of Knowledge** – acquiring ideas and skills that have been passed on by past generations and that form the base for the future progress of society.
- ✓ **Responsibility** – accepting responsibility for oneself, one’s learning, and one’s role in society.

These attributes were perceived as four dimensions of a whole rather than discrete segments. The document overall was intended to guide schools and teachers in the design of curriculum and instruction, i.e., helping them keep the “big picture” in view.

While this work was underway, a national document similar in many respects to Rhode Island’s Common Core of Learning was steadily gaining adherents. The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) in 1992 released the SCANS Skills. The Commission had been directed by the Secretary of Labor to: 1) define the skills needed for employment; 2) propose acceptable levels in those skills; 3) suggest effective ways to assess proficiency; and 4) develop a strategy to disseminate the findings to the nation’s schools, businesses, and homes. The Commission identified five competencies (i.e., skills necessary for workplace success) and three foundations (i.e., skills and qualities that underlie competencies) in the following arrangement:

## Foundation Skills

---

- ✓ **Basic Skills** – reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening.
- ✓ **Thinking Skills** – the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions, and to solve problems.
- ✓ **Personal Qualities** – individual responsibility, self-esteem and self-management, sociability, and integrity.

## Competencies

---

Effective individuals can productively use:

- ✓ **Resources** – They know how to allocate time, money, materials, space and staff.
- ✓ **Interpersonal Skills** – They can work on teams, teaching others, serve customers, lead, negotiate, and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- ✓ **Information** – They can acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate, and use computers to process information.
- ✓ **Systems** – They understand social, organizational, and technological systems; they can monitor and correct performance, and they can design or improve systems.
- ✓ **Technology** – They can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks, and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

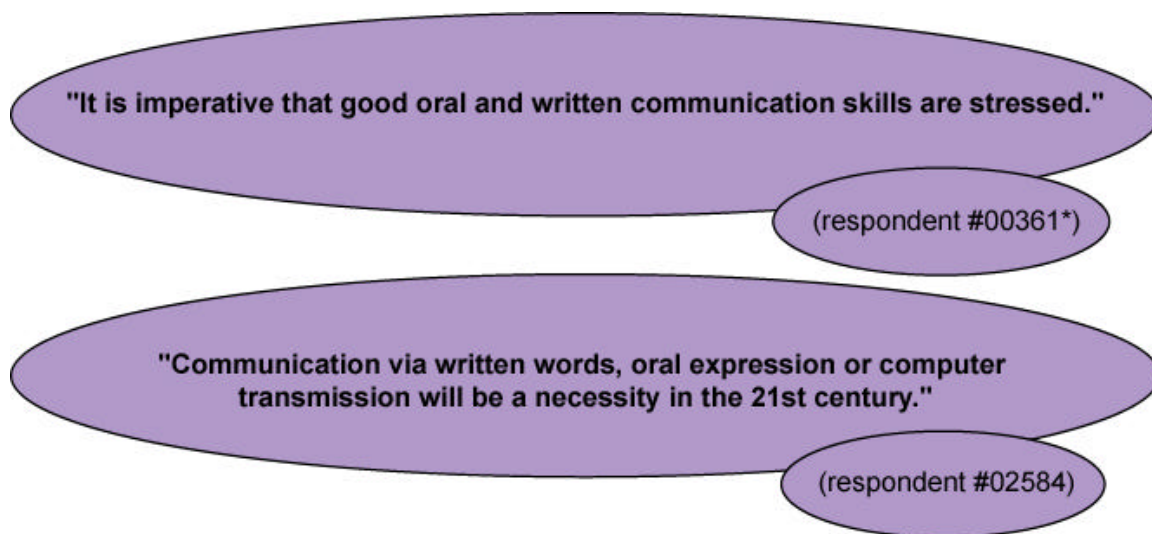
The report issued by the Commission provided additional detail for each of the Skills and the Competencies. The *SCANS Skills* formed the basis at the national level for the national School-to-Career movement, various initiatives in business and industry, the creation of the New Standards Reference Examinations (utilized by the state of Rhode Island as part of its State Assessment Program), and other efforts to promote system improvements. The *SCANS Skills* were also widely used in efforts to create Certificates of Initial Mastery (CIM) and Certificates of Advanced Mastery (CAM) in Rhode Island and other states and locales.

As we enter this new century, it makes sense to merge the *Common Core of Learning* with the *SCANS Skills* document to create an enhanced *New Common Core of Learning* for the State of Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders now have a single document that incorporates the best of both of these former documents and answers the question about what all Rhode Island adults should know and be able to do to meet the challenges ahead. Schools can use this document as they create curricula and learning experiences for students. Community and other nonprofit organizations working with adults and youth can use this document to focus on the skills and competencies that everyone needs to succeed in life. Businesses can use this document to ensure that both their incumbent and entering workforce have the skills and knowledge to succeed in today's and tomorrow's economy. Government can use the document to ensure

that delivery of government services is targeted to the attainment of these worthy educational goals. In short, all Rhode Islanders can use this document as a touchstone for those skills, dispositions, and competencies that we are going to demand from one another as we steer a course towards a brighter and better tomorrow. Accordingly, the RI Workforce Development System Interagency Team unanimously endorsed this *New Common Core of Learning* at its meeting in January 2002. The Interagency Team is composed of the heads of the following state agencies, organizations, and institutions:

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training  
Rhode Island Human Resource Investment Council  
Rhode Island School-to-Career Initiative  
Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation  
Rhode Island Economic Policy Council  
Rhode Island Office of Higher Education  
University of Rhode Island  
Rhode Island College  
Community College of Rhode Island

## COMMUNICATION



**One of the hallmarks of an educated person is the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and converse effectively. People with well-developed communications skills understand others and express themselves well. In addition, they give and receive constructive feedback, adapting their words and actions as reason and circumstances dictate.**

***Students who have acquired a common core of communication skills will:***

**Read widely and attentively by ...**

- ✓ Reading for a variety of purposes: to gain understanding, to appreciate the experience of others, to gather information and to enjoy leisure time.
- ✓ Building meaning while reading, determining the relative importance of ideas and connecting what is read to prior knowledge, other sources and their own experiences.
- ✓ Read critically: distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying inconsistencies, recognizing bias.
- ✓ Utilize reference materials, both print and electronic (e.g., dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases and original sources via the Internet) and features of written and electronic texts (e.g., tables of contents, indexes, chapters, headings, electronic search strategies, graphs, schedules, flow charts, manuals).
- ✓ Following written instructions.

### **Write persuasively and expressively by ...**

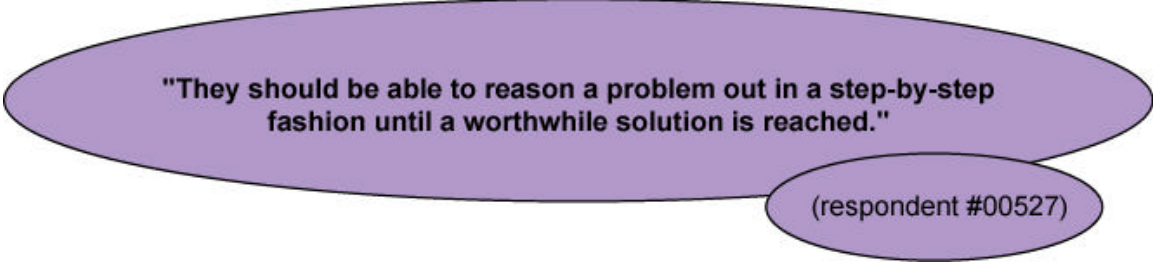
- ✓ Writing for a variety of purposes and audiences and creating suitable ways to communicate ideas (e.g., letters, essays, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, flow charts).
- ✓ Writing as a way of discovering and clarifying ideas.
- ✓ Engaging in a process that involves planning, organizing, revising and editing one's own writing.
- ✓ Supporting ideas through the use of facts, examples, quotations and arguments.
- ✓ Gathering information, taking accurate notes, and summarizing accurately, noting sources properly.
- ✓ Using correct spelling, punctuation, grammar and other language conventions.
- ✓ Making use of print and electronic reference tools, such as handbooks and grammar and spelling check programs, to locate language conventions.
- ✓ Using technology and software including text, data, graphics and communication to produce documents.

### **Speak, listen and converse intelligently by...**

- ✓ Listening and conversing in order to share information, build relationships, and promote understanding.
- ✓ Engaging constructively in an oral exchange of ideas, including appropriate recognition of verbal and non-verbal cues.
- ✓ Asking and answering questions.
- ✓ Delivering an oral presentation to a group, using appropriate language, information, gestures and media.
- ✓ Conducting and being the subject of an interview.
- ✓ Forming, expressing, and defending a point of view.
- ✓ Giving, understanding and following spoken instructions.
- ✓ Listening carefully and giving constructive feedback.
- ✓ Communicating with others using electronic media (e.g., audio, video, Internet).

- ✓ Communicating with others in more than one language.
- ✓ Communicating with people from various social, occupational and cultural groups.
- ✓ Working to clarify misunderstandings and to resolve conflicts peacefully and democratically.
- ✓ Understanding the impact of one's language on others.

## PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING



**"They should be able to reason a problem out in a step-by-step fashion until a worthwhile solution is reached."**

(respondent #00527)

**A rapidly changing world requires all people to be lifelong learners and problem solvers. Along with a common body of knowledge and skills needed for a productive life, students need to learn continuously and apply what they have learned critically and creatively to solve real life problems. Life long learning and problem solving are not separate from the common body of knowledge that comprises the content of schooling; rather, they complement it by helping students to acquire new knowledge, and to apply it in original and effective ways.**

***Students who have acquired a common core of problem solving skills will...***

**Learn continuously by...**

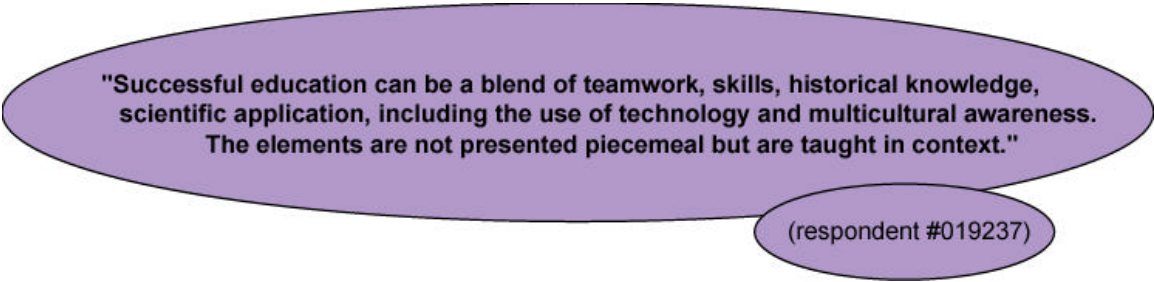
- ✓ Setting high standards in developing personal learning goals.
- ✓ Creatively accepting and pursuing challenges - stretching personal limits.
- ✓ Working cooperatively and/or independently as the situation demands.
- ✓ Using learning approaches that are suitable to personal, community and work related settings.
- ✓ Giving, receiving and evaluating constructive criticism.
- ✓ Learning from both failures and successes to cultivate and sustain efficient learning techniques.

**Efficiently solve problems and make effective decisions by...**

- ✓ Defining a problem, posing meaningful questions, generating and testing alternative hypotheses, establishing criteria for measuring success, and determining a course of action.
- ✓ Planning and organizing a problem-solving task requiring multiple steps, sustained concentration and long term commitment.

- ✓ Demonstrating flexibility, inventiveness, and persistence, revising a problem-solving plan as needed, and thinking “out of the box”.
- ✓ Seeking advice and information, analyzing and presenting data, identifying constraints and goals, generating and evaluating alternatives, considering risks, persuading others of a particular course of action and modifying plans in light of the input of others.
- ✓ Using appropriate techniques in acquiring new knowledge and skills and in researching and solving a problem.
- ✓ Observing, selecting and recording meaningful data.
- ✓ Accessing, organizing, applying, interpreting, recording, evaluating and integrating information from a variety of textual and non-written sources and subject areas.
- ✓ Questioning the validity of sources, recognizing fallacies, detecting a writer's or a speaker's point of view, and examining how facts and language are being used.
- ✓ Considering and weighing diverse perspectives, then defending a decision to accept, reject, modify or combine relevant perspectives.
- ✓ Employing a range of strategies, including ones that involve the application of technologies.
- ✓ Evaluating the quality and success of their own work.
- ✓ Developing the ability to appropriately generalize from specific experiences, observations, and understandings and recognize when generalization is not appropriate.

## BODY OF KNOWLEDGE



"Successful education can be a blend of teamwork, skills, historical knowledge, scientific application, including the use of technology and multicultural awareness. The elements are not presented piecemeal but are taught in context."

(respondent #019237)

People today build upon the ideas and skills of the civilization that went before them. This Body of Knowledge forms the base for schooling in the modern world. This schooling relies on knowledge of human thought and creativity from historical, scientific and social perspectives. The focus here is the application of knowledge in improving the quality of life for the individual in the community, workplace and society. The statements in this section are not intended to be an exhaustive catalog of subjects or precise content standards, but they suggest the general knowledge that all students should acquire and be able to apply.

*Students who have acquired this body of knowledge will...*

### **Know about themselves by...**

- ✓ Understanding the workings of the human body and mind in order to maintain personal health.
- ✓ Applying information and skills that enable successful functioning in everyday tasks.
- ✓ Developing skills necessary for employment including working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with diversity.

### **Know about others by...**

- ✓ Understanding the American political system in order to fulfill the duties of citizenship for personal and community purposes.
- ✓ Understanding the principles of the American economic system that allows the individual to participate in and benefit from that system.
- ✓ Showing an appreciation of their own culture and the culture of others, knowing the influence of cultural differences upon human interaction and having the ability to employ this understanding in improving cross-cultural relations.
- ✓ Understanding the influence of religious views and values on past and present society.

- ✓ Developing an understanding of literature and the arts as a reflection of values shaped by social or historical forces.
- ✓ Appreciating the major art forms: drama, dance, music and the visual arts.
- ✓ Having a basic understanding of the history and structure of the English language.
- ✓ Understanding how social, organizational and technological systems are designed, operate, and are improved through trend analysis, system diagnosis, philosophical, judicial, and sociological critique, and continuous improvement methods.

**Know about the natural and designed world by...**

- ✓ Demonstrating an understanding of people's relationship to the environment, the influence of the environment on human life and the use of the environment in conserving and improving life.
- ✓ Understanding key concepts of mathematics, science and technology; the relationships between and among them; and their strengths and limitations.
- ✓ Recognizing the impact of technology on the workplace and society, including implications for the environment.
- ✓ Recognizing the importance of mathematics, science and technology in daily life.
- ✓ Interacting and communicating confidently with others in using mathematics, science and technology to ask and answer relevant questions.
- ✓ Using scientific processes, mathematical reasoning, creativity, ingenuity, and technology to solve problems and build an understanding of the natural world.

## PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

---

"I believe that all young adults should #1 learn how to accept responsibility for their actions both academically and socially."

(respondent #00142)

***A pillar of the New Common Core of Learning must be responsibility. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires citizens to take responsibility for themselves, their learning and their society. By gaining an awareness of their responsibilities to themselves as individuals and to society as a whole, the youth of Rhode Island will be better equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow.***

***All Rhode Islanders, therefore, must be encouraged to take responsibility for their lives and the role each will play in society. As lifelong learners they will act on goals that they set for themselves, develop healthy habits and establish positive relationships, at home, in the workplace and in the community. They will develop personal characteristics that enable them to become good citizens, family members, and parents, as well as productive workers.***

***Students who exhibit responsible behavior will....***

**Accept personal responsibility for the well being of self and society by...**

- ✓ Developing habits to ensure physical, emotional and mental health.
- ✓ Making informed career and life decisions.
- ✓ Developing strategies to manage oneself and one's feelings.
- ✓ Coping successfully with negative peer pressure and media influences.
- ✓ Making and keeping healthy relationships.
- ✓ Buying and consuming responsibly.
- ✓ Understanding how technology affects human culture, the workplace and the environment.
- ✓ Being aware of our interdependence with the environment.

**Work responsibly in groups and as an individual by...**

- ✓ Allocating time appropriately, preparing and following schedules.
- ✓ Budgeting, keeping records, making forecasts, and adjusting budgets, schedules, and resources as required to complete assigned tasks or to reach worthy goals.
- ✓ Acquiring, storing, allocating and using materials and space efficiently.
- ✓ Working cooperatively with others in achieving a group decision or goal.
- ✓ Sharing, delegating, leading, contributing and following through.

- ✓ Respecting opposing points of view.
- ✓ Carrying through responsibilities and completing tasks.
- ✓ Knowing how and when to negotiate or compromise to reach a consensus.
- ✓ Using technology appropriately.
- ✓ Evaluating performance and providing feedback.

**Acquire the necessary skills, competencies and personal qualities to succeed in the workplace by...**

- ✓ Understanding the multiple pathways through which one may prepare for various careers.
- ✓ Applying the body of knowledge, communication and problem solving approaches appropriately in one's occupations.
- ✓ Understanding the value of labor and developing a work ethic.
- ✓ Managing effectively time, money, materials, space and people.
- ✓ Being flexible in adapting to new situations, analyzing information, and solving problems through the use of existing and emerging technology.
- ✓ Setting high personal standards for quality work, which satisfies the needs of clients and customers.
- ✓ Demonstrating dependability, honesty, friendliness, adaptability, politeness, productivity, leadership and initiative.
- ✓ Selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, maintaining and troubleshooting equipment.

**Show tolerance for human diversity by...**

- ✓ Learning about differences among people, religions, and cultures.
- ✓ Understanding the causes of prejudice and its contribution to social injustice.
- ✓ Showing courtesy and empathy toward others.
- ✓ Respecting the rights of all people.

**Understanding the importance of family and community by...**

- ✓ Practicing the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.
- ✓ Engaging in meaningful service to the community.
- ✓ Understanding the ethical dimensions of citizenship and parenting.

**Respond to challenges with integrity, honesty and courage by...**

- ✓ Maintaining high standards of academic honesty.
- ✓ Acting in an honest manner when dealing with others.
- ✓ Accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions.
- ✓ Setting priorities and accepting responsibilities in the home, family and community.

**Display a strong sense of self-worth and personal competency by...**

- ✓ Exhibiting knowledge of ones' personality accompanied by insights into ones' own behaviors, beliefs, and dispositions.

- ✓ Exhibiting self-respect and respect for others.
- ✓ Relying on strong interpersonal skills.
- ✓ Setting challenging, realistic goals.
- ✓ Knowing his or her own heritage.
- ✓ Developing and pursuing personal interests and goals.
- ✓ Exercising leadership in varied situations.
- ✓ Negotiating with others in a manner that moves a process forward.
- ✓ Teaching others what he or she knows.

## **NEW COMMON CORE of Learning for a New Century CO-AUTHORS – Fall, 2001**

Dennis W. Cheek, Director, Office of Research, High School Reform and Adult Education, RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Adjunct Professor of Education, University of RI

Linda Soderberg, Director, RI School-to-Career Initiative, RI Department of Labor and Training

## **COMMON CORE of Learning TEAM - Fall, 1995**

Pat DeVito and Marie C. DiBiasio, Co-Chairs

Joyce Andrade	Cynthia Duffy	Arlene Militello*
Pam Ardizzone	Patricia Lewis Dulac	Stephen Mitchell
Jane Arsenault*	Sandy Dunn	Fran Mossberg
Wendy Aronoff	Linda Filomeno	Olga Noguera
Ron Bate	Ken Fish	William Oehlkers*
Colleen Callahan	Bill Fiske	Al Olsen
Cathy Biggins	Tom Izzo	Fred Paszuarillo
Betty Ann Blackmer	Jo Eva Gaines	Rocco Rainone
David Brell*	Paul Gounaris	Tomas Ramierez
Barbara Brittingham	Barrie Grossi	Cornelia Readinger
Bob Britto	Jackie Harrington	Jack Riley*
Bert Brousseau	Vincent Hawkins	Mary Ann Roll
Susan Bryan	Ellen Hedlund	Susan Rotblat-Walter
Peter Calvert	Gloria Howard	Lynne Ryan
Sharon Capobianco*	Diane Horm-Wingerd	Diane Schaefer
Janet Carroll	Betsey Hyman	Marti Schwartz*
Mary Ann Carroll	Arlene Iannazzi	Robert Shapiro*
Jerry Carter	Michael Jolin	Susan Skawinski-Lima
Mary Chirico	Alegra Jones	Helene Skrnjarz
Elizabeth Cohen	Susan Kaplan*	Mary Ann Snider
Joan Colwell	Jim Karon	Joyce Stevos
Kathy Connolly	Josephine Kelleher	Stephanie Sullivan
Ed Costa	Jack Keough	John Susa
Roberta Costa	Diane Kohler*	Gladys Thomas
Nancy Cummings	Nina Laurenzo	Beverly Travers
Henry D'Alosio	Milyn Levine	Margaret Vendituoli*
William Davis	Maria Lindia	Nancy Warren*
Marge DeAngelis	John Long	Linda Washington
Rob DeBlois	Judy Marmaras	Ina Woolman*
Charlotte Diffendale	Andrea Mattia	Karen Wyche
Bernadine DiOrio	Sondra McBride	Robin Yates*
Thomas DiPaola	Cheryl McCarthy	Chip Young
Domenic Dougherty	Michael Mello	

\* Members of the Writing Team

**Notes:**



**The Rhode Island Department of Education  
and  
The Rhode Island School-to-Career Initiative  
would like to thank  
Printing Industries of Rhode Island and the Manufacturing Partnership  
for their valuable guidance and technical assistance in preparing this document.**

**We would also like to recognize Kristin E. Tavares, Marketing/Design Coordinator  
Manufacturing Partnership  
for her significant assistance and valuable technical expertise in the layout and design of  
this document.  
November 2001**